Annual Report
A recap of our work for our members in 2011
Dear Environment Ohio members,

This spring, I ran my first marathon in Athens, along a course that follows the Hocking River through the hills of eastern Ohio. As I reflect on a challenging year, I am grateful for the perspective of being a long-distance runner. Our work to protect the environment can sometimes seem like a race against polluters with no end in sight. But then I look back on the real progress we’ve made and the strength we’ve built along the way—and I know we’re succeeding.

We saved the Hocking Hills and our other parks from deep budget cuts this year and forged new alliances with land trusts and tourism groups in the process. We built lasting partnerships with public health officials through our campaign to defend the Clean Air Act. And we engaged thousands of citizens in our work, many of them taking political action for the first time.

My colleagues and I share a bold vision of a cleaner, greener future. Achieving that future won’t be easy, and we won’t get there overnight. We hope you share our vision, and continue to support us in our marathon to get there.

Sincerely,

Julian Boggs
State Policy Advocate for Environment Ohio
Lake Erie

Lake Erie is the jewel of our natural heritage. From family vacations at East Harbor to boating at Put-in-Bay, time at Lake Erie is a legacy we want our kids to inherit and enjoy. But the lake and Ohio’s other waterways are subject to increasing threats from toxic dumping and sewage pollution. We’re working to make sure Lake Erie and all our waters get the protections they deserve.

Update to sewage pollution standards

Whenever it rains, torrents of untreated sewage are released from overloaded water treatment plants into nearby waterways. In 2010, more than 10 billion gallons of sewage were dumped into Lake Erie, contributing to more than 1,200 beach closings and advisories on the lake. We have been pushing for strong rules to reduce sewage pollution—and last year, the Environmental Protection Agency announced such rules were in the works.

• The EPA recently announced it would issue long-overdue rules to prevent sewage pollution—but that decision is under attack. Last summer, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would have gutted the EPA’s ability to enforce the Clean Water Act.

• We were able to defeat the bill in the Senate, but polluters are still trying to block and delay the new rules. Now, we’re mobilizing thousands of people to write the EPA in support of strong protections for Lake Erie.

Federal Clean Water Advocate Piper Crowell released a report on threats facing our waters.
Ohioans from across the state love Hocking Hills for the opportunity they provide to escape the bustle of modern life and enjoy nature at its most beautiful. From the intricate crags of Old Man’s cave to the quiet serenity of the paths around Lake Hope, the Hocking Hills are special. But unless we keep standing up for their protection, the Hills’ beauty might not last forever.

**Park funding defended from major cuts**

Most of us are able to appreciate the Hocking Hills because of the beautiful state parks that allow public access. Unfortunately, Ohio’s state parks have been underfunded for a decade—with more than $500 million in backlogged, unfunded projects. But the governor and Legislature considered even deeper cuts to park funding this spring.

- We spoke out to save park funding. Hundreds of our members emailed the governor and submitted photos that we compiled into a factbook used to show legislators why the Hocking Hills are so valuable to Ohioans.

- Thanks to the efforts of our coalition, we were able to hold off the worst of the cuts, and funding to our state parks was reduced by only 6 percent.
Oil and gas drilling pose new threat

Even as we fought to keep the funding needed to preserve the Hocking Hills, polluters were lobbying the Legislature to open up our parks to a dangerous new form of drilling—hydraulic fracturing.

• To persuade the Legislature to keep parks closed to drilling, we testified in committee, met with lawmakers, and motivated our members to write thousands of public comments, make phone calls in key legislative districts, and submit letters to local media. We worked with the tourism industry to highlight the economic benefits of keeping our parks pristine.

• But in the end, both houses of the Ohio Assembly sided with polluters and voted to open Ohio’s parks to oil and gas drilling.

• Drills haven’t been put into the ground yet, but with a new shale gas boom on the horizon, it may only be a matter of time. That’s why we’re continuing to build the support we need to keep public lands off-limits to at least the most destructive drilling techniques.
Clean energy for Ohio

Environment Ohio has been working to move our state away from dirty fossil fuels and toward a robust clean energy economy. And we’re succeeding—since Ohio passed its Clean Energy Law in 2008, we’ve seen large-scale investments into the state in wind and solar, and a series of programs to improve energy efficiency. But some utilities are lagging behind the law’s standards.

New solar and wind farms move Ohio into a greener future

Ohio’s Clean Energy Law is already working to provide our state with pollution-free energy and create sustainable, green jobs. Since Environment Ohio helped pass the law in 2008, we’ve seen a boom in wind manufacturing in Cleveland and major solar installations at the Cincinnati Zoo, in Wyandot County and elsewhere. Here are some of the programs already underway:

• This summer, we saw the completion of Timber Road Wind Farm, Ohio’s first large-scale wind power installation. Located on the state’s windy western plains, it is already generating enough electricity to power 27,000 homes, and plans are under way to quadruple its size.

• Energy efficiency programs are helping us conserve electricity across the board by providing homeowners incentives for energy audits and super-efficient appliances. We’ve already saved enough through efficiency improvements to power 82,000 homes.

• Near Sandusky, Ohio’s largest solar farm started producing 12 megawatts of clean energy from the sun this year. About half of its 159,000 panels were constructed right here in Ohio, creating hundreds of new jobs in the process.
Clean Energy Law protected from attacks

It takes vigilance and tough advocacy to ensure that the promise of the Clean Energy Law is realized. Some of Ohio’s major utility companies are failing to live up to their clean energy commitments. Worse, big polluters are lobbying the Legislature to roll back key parts of the law:

- Ohio’s largest utility, FirstEnergy Corp, failed to meet its solar requirement for the second year in a row. Through letters to the editor, outreach to reporters, and a hard-hitting report grading utilities on their performance, Environment Ohio shone a public spotlight on FirstEnergy, leading it to make one final, half-hearted attempt to add more solar capacity to its grid.

- In the Statehouse, Sen. Kris Jordan introduced a bill to repeal renewable energy standards outright. Meanwhile, Gov. John Kasich has hinted he will try to “tweak” the renewable energy standard, even as he pushes for a new energy policy focused on fossil fuels. We’ll be standing strong for renewables in the coming year.

159,000 solar panels at the PSEG Wyandot Solar Farm near Upper Sandusky supply clean, green solar power for Ohio homes and businesses.
Ohio’s Clean Energy Law created the playing field for our clean energy economy. The law’s guarantee of a renewable energy market has spurred major investments across the state, including a planned 50-megawatt solar farm in the southeast and wind farms dotting our western plains. But some major players in the energy market are flouting the law.

**Report spotlights lagging utilities**

If the Clean Energy Law is to be a success, we need to make sure it’s being followed. That’s why we collected the facts and wrote a report card for Ohio’s Clean Energy Economy: *Ohio’s Clean Energy Report Card: How Wind, Solar, and Energy Efficiency are Repowering the Buckeye State*. The report assigns each state utility a grade on its performance.

- Ohio media covered the report, and headlines like “FirstEnergy failing on solar” and “DP&L, Duke get top grades for renewable power” made utilities and policy-makers alike see how the public is paying attention to their clean energy policies.

- The report also got the attention of federal policymakers—Sen. Sherrod Brown took the opportunity to respond to our report with a press release touting his record on clean energy.
Clean air, healthy families

We should be able to breathe clean air without worrying about mercury in our bloodstream or soot in our lungs. Yet coal-fired power plants and other industrial polluters spew hundreds of thousands of tons of dangerous pollutants into our atmosphere every year. We need to protect our families’ health by requiring polluters to clean up their act.

EPA to cut mercury, save 25,000 lives

In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency moved ahead with efforts to significantly reduce mercury, soot and smog pollution from power plants. We expect these standards to save more than 25,000 lives every year. We built support across the state to ensure these rules were adopted:

- We partnered with our national coalition of allies to help motivate more than 800,000 people across America to send the EPA public comments in support of strong action on mercury—no other single EPA rule has ever received so much public support.

- When polluters lobbied the Senate to pass bills that would block the EPA from acting on clean air, we rallied thousands of online activists to speak out. In March and April, our efforts succeeded when those bills were voted down in the Senate.

New air quality standards we helped win will cut mercury pollution. Bottom: Environment America’s Margie Alt (right) discusses clean air with EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson.

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